

Interview With Jan Schakowsky, Ron Macek, Fran Johns

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SOLEDAD O'BRIEN, CNN ANCHOR: Some families of soldiers who are serving in Iraq are seeking to turn up the heat on the Bush administration. They are calling for an independent commission to find out whether evidence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction was distorted to justify the war.

The families have some help in Congress. We're joined this morning by Representative Jan **Schakowsky** of Illinois. Along with her this morning, Ron Macek, whose wife Jessica (ph) is in Iraq and also Fran Johns whose son Rob (ph) just returned from there.

Good morning to all of you and thanks for joining us. And, Congresswoman, let's begin with you. What exactly do you want to accomplish by this -- I would say the rally and the news conference in total?

REP. JAN **SCHAKOWSKY** (D), ILLINOIS: We want to make it clear that these families and all Americans deserve to know the truth. What did the president know and his administration about the threat from Iraq? When did they know it? And what did they do with that information? It was distorted? It was exaggerated or manipulated?

this is war we're talking about, huge expense in life and in dollars. And we just want to know the truth.

O'BRIEN: The White House had no comment yesterday when we asked them for a comment on this. Does that disappoint you?

**SCHAKOWSKY**: Oh, no, I think that the White House will have to comment because the

demand for answers is growing and the kind of press conference and rally we're having today is just one demonstration. The fact that 400,000-plus people signed an online petition asking for it. The fact that more than 100 members of Congress are supporting this independent commission, 26 of them who voted in support of the war, that they want to know the truth.

O'BRIEN: Ron, let's talk a little bit about your wife Jessica. She's been with the National Guard for seven years now. Has she told you that she is very unhappy serving in Iraq?

RON MACEK, WIFE SERVING IN IRAQ: Yes, she has.

O'BRIEN: So she never expected to end up there?

MACEK: No. No. And she has no -- she has no problem answering her call of duty, nor do any of us, but we both feel that it's critical when lives are lost and this amount of money is spent and the outcome is uncertain that we know what the truth is.

O'BRIEN: So she and you are interested in finding out exactly what was behind the information behind Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, but in the meanwhile she is not adverse serving in Iraq. Is that what you're saying?

MACEK:: No, that isn't what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that even though they didn't want to go to Iraq they went anyway because that is their duty.

But at the same time, they, us and all of us other Americans deserve to know what the administration knew, when the administration knew it and why we're there in the first place. Because the fact of the matter is we have not found weapons of mass destruction.

O'BRIEN: Fran, let's talk about your son Rob. He's 31-years-old. He's a career Marine. He went into Iraq you say, expecting to find warehouses of sarin gas. Would you describe him as angry?

FRAN JOHNS, SON JUST RETURNED FROM IRAQ: No, I actually don't think Rob is angry. I think he's quite frustrated.

You know, Soledad, the troops can't choose which wars they fight in. We have to rely on our political leaders to use caution, to be prudent and to responsibly use the power they have to send our men and women to war.

And as information continues to come out that there were no weapons of mass destruction, and that this was the very reason the president gave for sending us to war, we feel we have a right to know about this war and, frankly for any future wars the administration may have in mind.

O'BRIEN: Ron, I have a question for you. Administration officials and investigators into the weapons of mass destruction have said be patient. We expect that we will find weapons of mass destruction. If indeed they do find WMD, will that -- will you and your wife support staying there?

MACEK: Yes. That was the primary justification for starting this war in the first place.

O'BRIEN: All right, well, Congresswoman Jan **Schakowsky** and also Ron Macek and Fran Johns, I thank you all for joining us this morning. Certainly appreciate your time.

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